

TJC TOUCHSTONE

SPRING 1996



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About the title:

A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins for trade. We trust that you, too, will find genuine distinctive elements of value in the TJC Touchstone.

Carolyn Hendon
March, 1986



This edition of Touchstone is
printed on recycled paper.



JUNE LEAF by Shelly L. Haines

GENEROSITY

by Linda Honeycutt

Finally, she's here! She is all I look forward to, all I have. I can't leave, mentally or physically, so I wait. I've been like this for 10 years.

It was my fault but no one knows that. I can't speak or move, can't write it down, can't tell the truth. At first, I was glad. No one knew! No one would ever know that I begged and pleaded with Billy to let me drive.

We were both 16, next door neighbors and best friends. Our families had lived next door to each other since we were in kindergarten. Me and Billy were inseparable.

He got a '65 Mustang for his birthday and I was jealous, so jealous. I never showed it though. I didn't even have my license yet, but I knew how to drive.

"Please," I begged, "just down Miller Hill one time — I'll never ask again." Finally Billy gave in. He was overly generous and could never say "No" to his best friend.

I felt so powerful behind the wheel as I revved the engine. I floored it and could only hear the squealing tires which drowned out Billy's protest. The last thing I remember was a squirrel and "Look out."

Later, I was told that we were thrown from the car. No one knew who was behind the wheel. It was Billy's car, so they assumed it was his fault. It was told for years how Billy went on a reckless joy ride, killed himself and paralyzed his best friend. Momma never forgave Billy. She was so bitter that his family moved away. They never knew the truth. No one does except me and God.

Momma hates me now. I'm a burden. She thinks that, because I can't speak, I can't hear either. I can hear, and even when she's out of my room, out of the house or asleep, I still hear her voice — "better off dead, better off dead." I would gladly trade places with Billy, except I wouldn't wish this hell on anyone. Momma's right.

Momma's at work and I can't be left alone, so she's here. She is beautiful, the only good thing in my miserable life. She calls me "Brown Eyes" or "Sweetie." She holds my hand and reads to me. Her voice is so much better than the TV. Her tone is loving and sympathetic, not bitter and angry. She feeds me slowly and neatly and doesn't cram the food down by throat. If I get messy, she doesn't scold or slap me. She is beautiful. Her name is Eve but Momma calls her "The Nurse."

She's not just a nurse. She is my world, my passion, my love. I want to tell her but I can't. Maybe she will see it reflected in my eyes. Then she will know and maybe

she will stay. Maybe she will take me with her to wherever it is she goes.

I want to go anywhere and everywhere. I've laid here so long that I am a part of the bed and it's a part of me. She knows this and wants to take me away. I have to tell her! I have to tell her!

She has finished the book. It's nine o'clock, time to go. "Please don't leave. I need to tell you something." She smiles at me and touches my hand. "Bye," she says, and turns to go.

"Wait, I love you, please stay," I shout. She pauses and turns towards me. My heart races. She is smiling. I knew it! I knew it! She loves me, too.

She walks to my bed and reaches for me. I want to reach back, but I can't. I am trapped inside the prison of my own body just as my thought and words are trapped inside my head. Eve takes her almost forgotten sweater from the edge of my bed and once again, turns to leave.

COLORS

by Alisa Carter

Colors
Colors fill my visions
The yellow of joy
The yellow of knowing someone cares
Deeply
My colors for you are the
Purple of violets
the green of pine trees at our spot
the blue that filled the sky those days
And the yellow of the sunshine that filled
the room that day
the yellow of joy
The yellow of knowing someone cares
Deeply

POLITICS

by Linda Honeycutt

One thing worse than quitters
are those afraid to start.
To share the labors of prosperity,
each must do his part.

The leaders and the judges,
they must show the way.
To teach and act with honesty
and foresee each coming day.

But they never fail to deceive us,
with things blind to our eyes.
Taking what once belonged to us,
robbing with their lies.

Hatred and destructiveness,
how ruthless can they be?
Throwing away the precious time,
how can we make them see?

Take the word of the man in the park
with the flower in his hair.
He knows all secrets that lie beyond
and all, he'd love to share ...



BONDING OF A MOTHER AND CHILD by Laura L. Hegg



PRAYER by Connie F. Morris

INNOCENCE OF A CHILD

by Jamie A. Melton

I look around what do I see
 But war and hate staring back at me
 Black versus white and wrong versus right
 I see long days turn to short nights
 I see tears shed from the homeless men
 I see murder and rape on the news at ten
 I see few uplifting and cheerful things
 So I sit here and wonder what it all means

Through the eyes of a child, though, the world is so dear
 For she knows her daddy is near
 From within his arms the world is warm
 No fears to feel during a storm
 No worries to take to bed at night
 In her eyes the world is bright
 If only I had the innocence of her
 This hatred and such would be only a blur

To just go back and start over again
 With no dark thoughts, not one sin
 To be washed and cleansed of all I've done wrong
 To be happy again and live with the Son
 To find an answer to my questions and doubt
 To find out what this life is all about
 As I sit here alone on this dark night
 I confess, oh, Lord, you are so right!



TWO BY TWO by Troy L. Parker

FOR MY FRIEND

by Vivian F. Scholes

Someday life will pass you by,
And you'll be sure to ask God, "Why?"
God is love, and God is true,
He has always been there and will always be there
for you.

God is watching you. He sees all that you do.
Why don't you do as he says to do?

Don't just sit there and scream and cry,
How dare you to keep asking God, "Why?"
You should hang your head and pray,
And ask God to forgive your sins today.

God is watching you. He sees all that you do.
Why don't you do as He says to do?

Tell the truth, you don't want to die,
Quit saying those things, quit asking God, "Why?"
Reflect on your life, and see if it's true,
God has always been there for you.

Turn your head upward to the sky...
You'll be much better off when you quit
asking God, "Why?"

LET ME DREAM

by Richard A. Carr

Let me dream
Both day and night,
Visions that
Are bold and bright.
Righteous dreams
For every friend,
Noble dreams
That have no end.
Let me dream
To a great height,
Of my dreams,
Let me keep sight.
Let me dream
For those without.
Let my dreams
Bring hope about.
Dreams—foolish!
That may be so,
Let fools dream
Dream as they go.

WAITING!

by Patricia M. Ragan

Awake in the dark.
Fold back the blanket.
Slide out of bed.
Pad to the window.
Peek at the street light.
—Nothing.

Awake in the dark.
Throw off the covers.
Bounce out of bed.
Bound to the window.
Look at the street light.
—Nothing!

Awake in the dark!
Kick off the comforter!
Leap out of bed!
Stomp to the window!
Glare at the street light!
SNOW

LITTLE FLOWER

by Christy L. Squyres

Lonely lonely little flower.
Where's your family? Half devoured?
Withered away—did they—you say
In the same sun from which they came
Always the ones who grow in vain.

FOREVER, MY LOVE

by Judy B. Rhodes

A year ago
I was the richest man on earth
My fortune resting
in the fullness of my heart
I rode the tallest horse
and climbed the highest mountain
never anticipating
the darkness of the valley's depth

Joy of my youth
now lives within this tiny room
Caged by the whiteness
of the walls and ceiling
I come and go
feeling strangely incomplete
Lost and abandoned
in the silence of her world

Today, again
I hoped that she would speak my name
that her smile
was meant for me alone
I searched her face
for traces of a memory
I held her hands
and warmed them with my breath

The sweetness
of her smile broke my resolve
I fled the room
to cry my pain in solitude
Her slender hands
plucked petals from red roses
As she sat
alone within her silent place

LOST AND FOUND

by Connie S. Conner

I found myself in the roly poly of the avant garde
circles of life going round
I lost myself inside
bouncing from one place to another
not considering that which fell from my pockets
now here I am still confused
what I thought was solid is crumbling
and I can't find that carabiner I thought was firmly attached—
Oh, but I see you.



CHEWIE by Connie F. Morris

SPRING

by Rebecca Wellborn

Those screeching herons
Croaking frogs and hissing snakes
Nature's noisy notes.

SUMMER

by Rebecca Wellborn

Gleaming bright yellow,
Darting through a darkened night,
Flash—Lightning Bug—Flash.

RAIN

by Alfred D. Llave

The rain pours wildly,
Thunder and lightning go mad,
The earth's thirst is quenched.

RENEWAL

by Elaine D. Graybill

Spring rains bring new life—
a shower of bluebonnets
to nourish the soul.

SUMMER WAS HARD HERE

by David W. Crawford

Summer was hard here.

Scorched landscape stands
as a monument to the uninvited guest.

The long-awaited solstice
desecrates a world in rebirth.

Fields, meadows and pastures
wilt in the fiery furnace.

Stream beds crust and powder wisps
trail the southwesterly.

A heat-baked, cracking earth
opens a moisture-barren maw.

The matron's milk ends,
drying at the pap.

The child's whimpers and moans
grow silently dim.

The solitary star stays the solitary crossing
disregarding, as high pressure builds.

And life struggles to raise its head
to count the loss.

Summer was hard here.

REJECTED

by Elaine D. Graybill

My life is all around me on the floor
Scattered everywhere out of order
I'm afraid some pieces are lost forever
Impossible to fix like a torn-up letter
People pass by and never look down
At all my broken pieces lying around
They're stepped on and twisted
They never take time to listen
I've picked them all up now
I'll put it all together somehow
Thought about going crazy
I don't know, maybe
Just wandering along aimlessly
Chasing empty dreams shamelessly
If I could I'd make it stop
And get rid of the shock
The shock of being thrown away
The pain of being led astray
Bitter tears never fixed it
Just face it, I was hit
Hit by a powerful force
That stabbed me with no remorse
Something much stronger than I
The more I try, the more I cry
The faster I run away
The quicker pain comes my way
Don't know what I expected
but all I am is rejected.

EAST TEXAS SUMMER

by Candace H. Schaefer

Black hot heat hides
Hind legs rubbing together
Under the converging pines,
Swaying in the dark
In the soggy summer night.



HOUSE AND POND by Robert B. Smith

UNDERAGE LOVE

by Albert W. Moore

The hot sun, the sweaty skin,
The wind blows with thoughts of sin.
Blowing hair and soft green eyes;
She makes the softest of loving sighs.

Soft young skin, her gentle smile,
That auburn hair shines for a mile.
Innocent as a baby just born,
Her lack of experience is to be forewarned.

Easy, slow and a loving touch,
A unrelenting desire to experience such.
A young, fresh, vibrant love,
A soaring spirit like that of a dove.

A maturing woman with a lot to learn,
But not as much as her desire burns.
An older man she thinks she loves,
Not quite right, like non-fitting gloves.

What will she do? She cannot wait,
For the love of a man and a possible mate.
Three years or more she will have to wait
For the happiness of two people as mates.

LOVE LOST

by Linda Honeycutt

An old man sits with blood red eyes
upon an old park bench.
A young child approaches, but quickly leaves
for he can't stand the stench.

A young girl stands upon the bridge
that towers, oh, so high,
and a tear rolls down to touch the ground
as she spreads her wings to fly.

A middle-aged woman sits for a moment,
then lays a gun aside.
She thinks a thought, of a battle done fought
and how, so hard she tried.

A baby boy wrapped in rags
is thrown into the street.
His young mother sits and sadly thinks
of a promise she didn't keep.

Anywhere upon the earth,
we all must pay the cost
of broken hearts and cast-out parts
and echos of old love lost ...

GIRL IN THE SAND

by Leona Colquitt

There she stands, as if a dream,
on the far away hill.

Her feet clench the unknown
sand of the desert.

She braves the mighty gusts of
the forceful winds, her arms,
she does not use to shield
herself from the storm.

She stands there looking down
the hill at the gallant men
fighting that forgotten battle.

The battle she refers to as a
painful journey down
that unknown road.

The road is only and unknown
to those left at home to deal
with the days filled with
worries and nights filled with
painful dreams.

The girl asks one question over and
over ... she receives no answer.

A question only they would know,
for the answer is in their
hearts only.

To those of us left at home,
this question marks painful
memories, of what you have
left behind.

The question you may ask anyone,
but the girl knows it best.

I ask you, the men fighting
that battle in the sand ...

When are you coming home?

IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME

by Stanecia Wade

August 10, 1989 is a horrible day that my family will never forget as long as we are breathing. That particular Friday nothing in the house seemed to have much life. The plant's leaves hung downward like a sad, lonely child without a friend in the world. Spike, my brother's hyper dog, whined all day long as if he knew what was going to happen that grim night.

My brother, Lamont, was planning to go to the theater Friday night. Just about every teenager hung out at the movies every Friday and Saturday night. Lamont's stiff ironed clothes, looking like they had come from the cleaners, were lying on his bed without one single wrinkle. Eventually, seven o'clock eased around, and Lamont rushed like a cannon ball out of the depressed house with his friends. They were on their way to the popular hang-out.

After the movies, Lamont and his friends went to Taco Bell, the next over-crowded hang-out after the movies are over. As soon as they arrived in the Taco Bell parking lot, a fight broke across the street at the old, run-down flea market. My brother followed the crowd of people that stampeded across the street like a herd of horses being chased by a predator. One of the foolish boys who was fighting pulled out a dull, black gun, and started shooting at his enemy like a

crazed man who did not care about precious life. As the rushing crowd heard the blasting eruption of the powerful hand gun, everybody either fell to the ground or ran for their lives. My brother was the unlucky one picked out of the entire scared crowd by two selfish bullets hitting his innocent chest violently. One bullet attacked the area above his heart. As the bullet seized my brother, he fell on his back with blood rushing out of his chest like a broken faucet.

Thirty minutes later, my mother and I heard an impatient knock at the door. She opened the door quickly, and my cousin was standing in the door with his shirt stained with blood shouting, "Lamont has been shot!" Instantly, my mother and I rushed out of the house to the unbearable scene. As she approached the scene, the police officer told her that Lamont had been rushed to the hospital. When we arrived at the hospital, the doctor sympathetically told my mother that Lamont did not make it through the trauma of the wounds.

The news of my brother's death totally shocked us to the point of denial. My family could not and did not want to believe that my sweet and loving brother was gone in only a minute. Today, it is still hard to believe that Lamont is gone. I lost my brother because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

SPIRIT DANCER

by Judy B. Rhodes

A life in torrent
places the self
in disregard.
In the now-and-slow
lies all the substance
of a longer day.
I curse the storm
which tosses me
beyond my reach,
as I dance
in rapid motion
rushing toward the morrow
Too much, too soon,

too old!
My youth unsavored,
love is lost in time.
I hold a thought,
try a memory.
Then, focus shifts
and truce, again, is forfeit:
The mind, racing,
creates its own agony
And in the wake of Spirit
suffers Soul.



GETTING TO GO WITH BIG BROTHER by Debra D. Powell

I WAS A TEENAGE WAITER

by Tony Carvajal

There are all kinds of jobs to be had in this world. Wonderful, exciting professions that can take one all over the country or the world. One can be an airline pilot, a movie actor or a carnival ride operator. One can choose from a wide variety of glamorous and distinguished careers. Or one can choose to be a restaurant server.

One day, at the Mexican restaurant where I worked as an 18-year-old bus boy, the manager began asking me questions: "Tony, do you know how much a waiter can make in one night?" or "Hey, Tony, you gonna be a bus boy all your life?" Finally whispered, "You know, Beverly would go out with you if you weren't a bus boy." This gambit produced the desired effect. "I want to be a waiter," I blurted out. Moments later I was paired with a seasoned waitress who had brown hair with gray roots.

Hazel was probably in her mid-50s, plump, swayed side to side as she walked and smoked three packs of cigarettes an hour. Hazel was never seen without a butt in her mouth, but she quit the instant a no smoking ban for employees was installed in the dining room. She was a no-nonsense woman who said what had to be said and no more. "Get the chips." "Ask 'em what they want." "Don't forget to look under the plates. Some of these bastards like to hide the tip."

Under her tutelage I quickly became a greedy, money-grubbing but cordial waiter. Hazel's only disappointment was that I wouldn't take up smoking. "Look like a man, already," she'd puff.

Soon, however, even the allure of a quick buck wasn't enough to compensate for the irksome duties inherent in the trade. These difficulties were minor in themselves but when they happened back to back or simultaneously, it was pure hell.

There was the customer who would not let me leave his table until he decided on his meal. I told him to take his time and I'd be right back, but he said to wait, it would only take a second. Five minutes later he was still staring at the menu as if it had grown breasts. "Sir, I'll be right back," I pleaded. "No-no, here it is. What's in a burrito? Will it give me gas? Instead of beans can I have

zucchini?" People like him always seemed to always materialize during the rush hours.

Equally as irritating was the bus load of high school kids that showed up 15 minutes before closing. My boss would come over and say, "Tony, you're young. You take 'em." Invariably, it would take 20 minutes for everyone to use the rest room, annoy the staff and settle down. When the order was brought out, everyone had changed seats and giggled hysterically as I threw away my sequential list. Of course, they had to have separate checks.

Asking to have a Friday or a Saturday off from work was blasphemy because those were our two busiest days. Seniority had its privileges and Hazel, having worked there for 23 years, was first in line for week-ends off. Then came two cooks, the pot washer and the pastry chef.

But what finally made me quit was the recurring nightmare. In my dream, I have just walked into the restaurant and someone tells me there is a customer already seated at one of my tables. "No problem," I say cheerfully. I go to the kitchen, fetch the chips and hot sauce and jauntily walk to the table. As I open the door to the dinning room, the hostess appears informing me of another party. Still "no problem," I remark. No sooner have I placed the chips on the first table when suddenly my whole station is full of customers clamoring for attention. I try mightily to attend to the impatient lot, but I am overwhelmed. Just as panic sets in and I am about to scream—I awaken in a shivering cold sweat.

It's been 20 years since I actually waited on a table and just 10 years since my last frightening nightmare. I remember it well. In that dream, as the panic walled up inside of me, just before I woke up, I yelled "I quit!"



BYGONE DAYS by Robert B. Smith

HOLIDAY

by Elizabeth Mathis

Sweet Potato Pie
Pulled from a roaring oven
Cooled on the back porch

BUDGET GOURMET

by Carolyn J. Hendon

Pomegranate taste?
Pluck plummy little pumpkins:
Free-range persimmons

FADING AWAY

by Jamie S. Farris

FORTY

by V. Laura Bozeman

Behind me lies a youth
 slain by life's truth.
An old woman waits for me ahead,
 our fateful meeting I dread.
She waits on the road patiently,
 a distant beacon to guide me.

On my forehead sewn by time
 for each decade a line—
One for anger, one for pain
 and one for anxiety's reign.

Another now sewn for dreams forlorn
 that leave the heart asunder torn.
Wisdom wins over idealistic whims
 as yesterday grows dim.

Like Muhammed on my mountain I sit,
 and muse the age as a prophet:
To have with all my wit and strife
 arrived ... and survived at forty.

Into myself I delve and hide
Escape the pain of the world outside
And mend the scratches of the heart
Reside in the comfort of the dark
 The pain it grows
 Tho' no one knows
My soul is being smothered
My thoughts undiscovered
 Inside it is quiet
 I see reality and hide it
 No more will I care
 But live in despair
Because I'm beyond reach
My countenance bleached
All expression is lost
My eyes cover with frost
 I gaze at the walls
 Explore the halls
Voices I no longer hear
 No more will I fear
But the window's deep calling
I'm slipping, I'm falling
My sight is so dim
 Blinded by sin
 I should hold on!
 All hope is gone
I never thought I would
And didn't think I could;
But I gave up on existing
 I'm tired of resisting
I'm tired of resisting, so tired of torment
 I'll remain dormant
 and when it's all over
 Maybe I'll recover
They think I'm so strong
They've never been so wrong
It doesn't matter now
And I don't care how
I can't find the way;
I'm fading away ...



EZA by Connie S. Conner

HE STILL CARES

by Jamie A. Melton

God has given me so much for which to be thankful. My parents are still together and they raised me as a team. I didn't have a different home to visit each weekend like many have now. I have a wonderful boyfriend who is caring and understanding. I can even say I have a great big brother. He showed me that even when others say things aren't possible, you can make it if you have faith in yourself, others and above all, in God.

I guess I had a perfect life until my senior year. I was spoiled rotten, but I never even realized it. Everything had just been handed to me because of my God-given talents that others appreciated. It took a lot of work and dedication, but I never had to struggle to make good grades, get jobs or do

things that many people worked hard to accomplish.

Then it happened. My dad who had worked in the oil field as an engineer since before I was born, lost his job. His company was sold and the new owners decided they only needed a couple of the former employees. So, there we were with only Mom's salary as a teacher's aide to make ends meet. Dad had very little schooling and all he really knew was his work. It couldn't have happened at a worse time as my graduation approached.

I didn't know what to do. You just take things like jobs and family for granted until you start to lose them. But Dad started applying at different places and I did all I knew to do ... spent hours a day on my knees in prayer. Despite a lot of tears and a lot of heartache, we made it through.

Then, as my senior year drew to a close, my counselor called me into the office. She said she knew I wanted to go to a big university, but how would I feel about staying at TJC on a Presidential Scholarship for journalism. I don't think my face could have held a

larger smile. I was nearly in tears.

Now I have a seasonal job at Baskin's and Mom is working days at school and working a seasonal job at Best Buy. Dad is working for Smith Tools in Tyler. They do not know how long they can keep him, but they have him traveling all the time. My mom and I are really having to get used to his being gone for a week or more at a time.

I have proof now, though, that God is still alive and well. I started practicing some of the things I taught the first and second grade Sunday school class at First Baptist Church at Swan. I folded my hands as I told the children to do when they pray, but I didn't close my eyes. Instead I looked right at my fingers. There an angel was sitting with her wings and halo, ready to listen. I would talk until I cried, but I also knew she was a direct link to God and that he would hear every word.

It must have worked. The proof is in that angel God sent into my life disguised as an ordinary man. He may hide his halo and wings, but Brent is an angel to me. God sent him just when I needed someone most. God is pretty funny that way. Sometimes he lets you take a huge fall just so he can pick you up, dust you off and say, "See what happens when you stray from me?"

I know now never to give up. No matter how bad it gets, I just look around and am thankful for what I have. I will always have to work to make things happen, but I will never have to do it alone. An awesome God is just waiting for me to call his name. I just kneel and talk to my angel. She's there all the time—all I have to do is take the time. She is pretty cool about listening and God is wonderful about answering. It may not be immediate, but I must remember he is working on his time scale which is based upon eternity, not ours based upon mere days.

DALLAS

by V. Laura Bozeman

Skyscrapers of glass and steel jut high above the horizon,
monuments of money and power, temples of the space age.
Progressive and futuristic, energy eclectic,
money is electricity in the air.

A Uranian vibration is the keeper of time,
the beat of change for the city.

A sea of cars swarms the freeways in never-ending waves,
while aviation lights on top of skyscrapers
sear through hazy smog, and signal the skies ...
as they wait for aliens to land.

RITE OF PASSAGE

by Connie S. Conner

Of all the poetry I've read,
none of it sticks in my head
except the one about the swing,
which left me for years pondering ...

what were the 9th and 10th lines?

When I first read it I was nine.
It was too long. It was 12 lines
according to the other kids
who didn't memorize it; I did.

What were the 9th and 10th lines?

It was at that point then I knew
they had all memorized haikus.
Their easy way was not for me.
But, to get back to my story . . .

what were the 9th and 10th lines?

Thought it written by Robert Frost;
I searched, but it's forever lost!
I came across it once again
by Robert Louis Stevenson.

What were the 9th and 10th lines?

Now 20 years have passed; I find my childhood I've left far behind.
The other day I passed a swing
I can't resist; no one's looking ...

*"Till I look down on the garden green,
down on the roof so brown-"*

**It's back! My poem, my childhood pride!
My happy thought now safe inside.**



THE LOST ART OF SYRUP MAKING *by Carolyn N. Jackson*

REDNECKER

by David W. Crawford

Rednecker, sidewinder, pinching for a chew,
Hat donner, pistol packer, quaffing down a brew.

Saddle soaper, bean mucker, likes a truck that's new,
Rope thrower, whiskey hugger, swearing off the ewe.

Rednecker, two stepper, country hummer, too,
Bull rider, dog scratcher, jeans are tight and new.

Hoedowner, stomp scraper, sun's a workday hue,
Dogie doggin', sheepshankin', haircut short to crew.

Rednecker, buckybronkin', narrow is the view,
Dung kicker, buckle toter, ain't really got a clue.

SECOND VISIT

by Richard A. Carr

The traffic drones as
The quick go about their daily tasks,
Yet I am in the abode of the completed
Looking for a friend from the past.

Twenty feet to your right, a
Gentle spirit seemed to say.
Oh, am I glad you came to
See me on this bright day.

It's been so long,
You look well.
Please sit and stay awhile.
I have something to tell.

Yes, I'll stay for a time.
What is it you have to say?
Please hear this, my fourth-born,
Sit still and listen for now.

The future comes from the past and
The past from the present, so
Live each day with love and peace
For the shape of what's to be

Is determined today.

JUST ANOTHER YANK

by W. Steven White

It's wrong to kill a fellow man
But he's just another Yank
and he's leading blue-clad infantry
into our thin gray ranks.

I wonder what he's thinking
as he proudly leads them all
He surely realizes
that he'll never reach this wall.

This war has raged for four long years
through days of snow and mud
This army's been to Hell itself
admission paid in blood.

I've seen young boys go to their deaths,
no shoes upon their feet.
But they would have jumped into their graves,
before they would retreat.

The guns have started firing now
the smoke begins to smother
and with stinging eyes I recognize
the face of my younger brother.

HI-HO SILVER

by Rebecca Shelton

Sitting by the classroom pane,
I watch the cold wind blow.
I'm thinking about my bicycle,
... it's a birthday present, you know.

I turned eight years old day before last
and besides my brand new bike,
I got a set of G.I. Joes
and a Batman flying kite.

For two whole days I played with them...
rode up and down the street.
Played army games with my G.I. Joes
and the Batman kite was neat.

But I just can't say I was ready yet,
to leave my bike with a host
of other nameless, faceless bikes,
tied like a horse to the flag-fence post.

I'm waiting for the bell to ring
so I can run outside,
I'm ready for that bell to ring,
my patience won't abide

another minute Rin-n-ng ...
Hi-ho-Silver ... Ride!

THE DRIVER

by Alfred D. Llave

It's 10 'til 8,
I will be late
My car pedal feels the weight.

I feel the rush,
I know I must
Pass and leave them in the dust.

I pass them by
It's fun to fly!
Road becomes my private sky.

Then overhead,
Yellow's now red
Suddenly my foot is lead.

Didn't be kind,
I acted blind,
Smiled and left them all behind.

I heard a bam!
Now here I am,
Hurting in a traffic jam.



YESTERYEAR by Dottie L. Parker

THE RIDE

by L. Maxine Johnston

"That Gray Buck is certainly a fine looking horse," Raymond said. "Too fine to just leave in the pasture for seven years without ever having had a rider or saddle on his back." Raymond was taking a breather from the job of vaccinating, branding, worming and dehorning cattle on the thousand-plus acre ranch where he had recently taken the job as manager. He looked at the gun-metal gray Arabian stallion that stood hip-shot in the corral, swatting flies with his long black tail.

"Don't get any big notions," Raymond's Uncle Clyde spoke up. "You try riding that horse and people will mistake you for an eagle.

He'll pitch you over the moon and kick you bald when you land."

Raymond shrugged, turned and went to work on the cow that Clyde and Shorty, the ranch hand, had just put into the squeeze-chute.

Later that day, along about sundown, as I was putting supper on the table, one of the twins came running in hollering, "Momma, Daddy's going to ride Gray Buck."

I ran to the corral just in time to see Raymond walking to Gray Buck with a saddle. Clyde, riding Rowdy, had a rope around Gray Buck's head and had it close-hitched around his saddle horn, pulling Gray Buck's head up tight so he couldn't pitch while Raymond threw a blanket and saddle on him, cinched it up tight, then slipped a hackamore over his nose. Raymond went into the saddle and Clyde cut the rope with his pocket knife.

Gray Buck stood for a moment, still, except for his willing eyes and nervous trembling of his powerful haunches. Then, like a clock whose key had been turned one too many rounds, he came unwound. He went straight up, gathering his forces in a high twisting leap, landing joltingly on his forefeet, hindfeet whiplashing the air with a loud crack. Then he put his head down and began to buck like he meant it. As Gray Buck kicked high with his hind feet, Raymond raked his spurs over the withers. As he lunged forward, the spurs raked toward the cantle.

Raymond kept a steady pressure on the rein with his left hand, his right hand holding his Stetson, wind-milling in the air to provide balance. He held steady, hanging on limber like a catamount clinging to a limb that had been caught upon a whirlwind. For an eternity that lasted about two minutes, man and horse fought it out like their lives depended on it. I guess they were both right.

Gray Buck's life until now had been independent, with no riders, no responsibilities, the freedom of the range. He wasn't going to let that change if he could help it. Raymond knew, if he got thrown, it would hurt more than his pride; maybe break something he would rather keep in one piece. So they fought it out. Finally Gray Buck gave one last high gyration and then stood quivering, head hanging, gulping air.

Raymond sat a moment, dazed and uncomprehending of the fact that it was over and he had won. Clyde rode close on Rowdy, grabbed the reins from Raymond's hand and took a dally round his saddle horn. Raymond looked around him for a moment like a sleeper awakening in a strange place, then climbed slowly down from the saddle, took a couple of steps before his knees gave way, sending him to the ground in a kneeling position.

FOCUS

by Patricia M. Ragan

From a folded paper boat in the middle of the pond,
I throw a pebble, causing motion.
It expands and grows, a ripple
affecting all the other paper boats on the pond.

From another little paper boat,
my husband throws a pebble.
I watch as his ripple advances.
It reaches my paper boat and I capsize.

God sighs and restores my little boat.
"Keep your eyes on me," he smiles.
He throws a stone into the middle of our pond.
I watch the enormous waves replace our ripples.
I put my eyes on him.

Somehow, without my quite knowing how,
my husband's boat is beside mine.
The boats bounce as we tie them together.
My husband steers and we both watch God,
and somehow, without my quite knowing how,
we stand afloat.

HER DAY

by Melissa Kelly

Death and dying. She could write theme paper after theme paper about it. She could psycho-analyze grieving families, run a funeral home or even become a professional obituary writer, if such a thing existed. The girl was a habitual mourner. Every two months or so, it seemed as if God would send her on a new assignment. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to learn to live without so-and-so.

Learn to live. That was a laugh. From dying, all she had learned was how to die. She knew that one couldn't commit suicide, because it left too many questions and people go around blaming themselves. Drowning was a definite no. People refused to talk about it because it is such a slow, horrible death. Car wrecks were all right as long as one was buckled-up and not speeding or drunk. If anyone violated these prerequisites, people started asking the what-if questions and you get a lot of self-suckers at your funeral. Old age death isn't that great anymore because all you do is live "healthy" (a.k.a. living in life condom) just so you can try to prolong death.

These funerals are terrible because all people do is talk about how vibrant one was while the dead person is lying there like a piece of petrified wood. This was one of those suicide funerals. Who the hell were some of these people? These were people who snubbed her at school and cried like she was their best friend at the funeral.

The girl shrugged softly and concentrated on not crying. This was a task she had perfected. You

had to find a way to callous yourself for a funeral. Everyone is different. Some must try to temporarily erase memory of the deceased from their banks. Others might try telling jokes to themselves during the sermon. Try not to make the jokes too funny because laughter at a funeral is not always considered appropriate. A few may need to cry themselves dry before the funeral in order to avoid the unnecessary p.d.a. One important thing a beginner must learn is that one can never listen to the speaker. Speakers usually spark memories that can be dangerous to the emotions. The speakers in this funeral appeared to be speechless. Their faces were distraught as if they had come unprepared to give a eulogy to an audience. The audience leaned forward throughout the tangled display of phonetics with expressions of sincere sympathy. The girl quietly amused herself by noticing the many different nose lengths in this one service alone. These were much more interesting than the last one. Oh, finally, the speakers were being seated.

Now comes the march to the cemetery. These were usually very scenic and sort of like a hiking trip. Heels made the footing precarious and, depending what the weather was like, one was extremely hot or cold. It is quite necessary for one to refrain from reading tombstones around the burial site. These, too, can jog your memory from places that it was supposed to stay.

Now comes the toughest part of the funeral. The dedication song. This is the song that you can never listen to for enjoyment again. This song means the question about why did they have to die once more. Nothing but sheer will power can get you through this. A

hint on this is to listen to a sad song before the funeral and practice not crying while you are thinking about your long lost deceased person at the same time.

After the funeral, she decided to go to the ice cream shop with her friends. Here, she is able to rehash the points in the funeral when she nearly cried. That night another battle begins and she braces herself for it. Trying to sleep with a head full of tears is an incredible task. She wanted to call a friend, but figured it was too late. She felt like her stomach was eating the rest of her body. Her chest began hurting so she carefully selected a late night show. Thank goodness, this only happens every two months.

INDIAN SUMMER

by Marie Garner and John B. Miller

Blades of grass breathing
Gasping for ambient air.
Death awaits stillness.

AUTUMN

by Elaine D. Graybill

Autumn is wistful,
between longing and regret—
unresolved space.

THE LAST LEAF

by Merrill O. Cantrell

Why hang you there?
Halfway between heaven and earth ...
Fluttering, sometimes still, fluttering again,
Like a small brown banner ...

The summer romance ...
That bore all your friends,
And sustained them for a season,
Has faded like a star at dawn ...

Why hang you there?
Clinging to the sycamore limb,
Whose life-giving juice has fled to the root,
While you remain, abandoned ...

A stronger romance,
Has bound you to the limb of life ...
You will not surrender to a season
As long as there is hope of spring.



FALL ON THE LAKE by Robert B. Smith

THREE FOR THE SUMMER

by Pat P. Logan

ABOUT HELEN

Stubborn old woman,
wrists swollen red and raw as a turkey gobbler's wattle,
go ahead,
set your lips in a long, grim pencil line
of stubbornness,
(the peaches won't wait, you said)
peel and slice
peel and slice
the gold sliding off the silver into the bowl.
Stubborn old woman,
look at your crooked fingers, how can they?
the sharp blade might as well be paring
your own skin,
each inhaling a hiss of pain,
until you have done every last damn peach in town.
Stubborn old woman,
thank you.

SWEET THING

I admire you with my eyes,
but, sweet thing, come closer,
let me touch, let me stroke
your soft skin,
I think of the goldenness underneath
and easing, sliding, sinking into your ripe redness,
blessed obsession,
hot days paramour,
oh peach,
come, let me devour you.

SEDUCTIVE FRUIT

Lovely, long sun days,
longest day of all,
luscious season,
you are so wanton, long and slow,
stretching your languid legs in the sun,
the virgin petals open slowly and invite,
and the tiny, moist drops cling and glisten.
Cool your mornings and evenings,
but stay with us in your long noon's heat,
bright illusion,
you seem to vanquish death,
linger awhile yet.



CHILD'S PLAY by Debra D. Powell

ALL IN TIME

by Christy L. Squyres

I'm standing at the graveside
With my love to part
I hear a storm outside the tent
Or is it in my heart?

Tear-stained cheeks and walnut faces
Is all that's left to see
But no amount of crying
Will bring him back to me.

The smell of dying flowers
Becomes bittersweet and true
I never said I loved him
I only hope he knew.

LAST THOUGHTS

by Melissa Kelly

I listened intently against the closed door
The silence shattering on the oaken floor.
My chest heaved mightily at a broken cry,
and I knew at this moment he would surely die.
I heard a mourning wail crush my burning ear,
and all I could think of was this overpowering fear.
This profession of the living had taken a sudden turn,
and all of my thoughts began to tumble and churn.
I closed my eyes to shut out the sound,
and slowly I heard footsteps over the ground.
All this time I thought I had imagined these thoughts,
but it was the death approaching me that I had fought.



HEAVEN LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE DOWN by Laura L. Hegg

DREAMS ARE FULL OF LIES

by Phillip A. McMahon

Doors are closing all around
Walls are crumbling to the ground;
Breaking through to the inner place,
Heart beats fast, a heavy pace.
People talking
Slowly walking
Faster, faster,
True disaster;
Creep until they find the place
Stop the cries, forget the face
Cold and solid, the body lies
Tears falling from their eyes;
People mourning
Never speak
Until the morning
Of next week.
Doors are closing all around
Walls are crumbling to the ground
Then I slowly open my eyes
And find that dreams are full of lies.

EACH DAY

by Victor L. Siller

Each day you grow older, that is all I hear,
You are afraid, afraid to grow old;
Each day you are afraid, afraid to look at your face,
afraid of what you will see.

But each day as you grow older,
You become more wise,
You gain more experiences,
You share more of life.

Each day you grow older and more beautiful to me.
Each day you grow older is another day for me.
Each day you grow older is the time that we share.
Each day you grow older is another day you see
(for me).
Each day you grow older, I grow more deeply in love.

So don't complain, don't worry, don't cry,
Think of me, for
Each day you grow older, you are more beautiful to me.

A MAN WHO LOVES

by Albert W. Moore

A man who loves, who sees life bright,
Is a man whose soul flies like a kite.
His feelings soar like birds into clouds.
His love makes him tall, and oh, so proud.

A man who loves, sees life bright,
Is a man who sees the world in a blinding light.
His love outshines all that can be seen;
Love helps him be all that he can be.

The love of the woman standing by his side,
Makes him boast and fills him with pride.
Her wondrous smell, that loving smile,
Carries him higher for many miles.

The way she moves to touch his skin,
Is like that of an angel watching over him.
Her exotic eyes look deep into his soul,
To make everything else seem lifeless and droll.

A man who loves can never believe,
That the hurt and pain can be relieved.
Here stands a woman of beauty untold,
Who crushes the pain and makes him whole.

Love, sweet love, has finally come.
She holds him close and he goes numb.
The pain is gone, and the joy of life abounds.
Their love unbroken and all around

Forever into the future their love holds true,
Not even death can throw love askew.
Love knows no bounds and brings them forth,
Like one lone star that points true north.

WOMAN

by Albert W. Moore

As the sun creeps through the trees,
Your perfume comes to me on a breeze.
Like that of honeysuckle fresh on the vine,
It brings your face to the window of my mind.

Auburn hair and rosy cheeks,
My mind is agasp at its first peek
Of beauty untarnished and untold.
a beauty of pleasure to behold.

Cherry red lips, eyes of wooden brown,
Her eyes as soft as lambs' flowing down.
Lips so supple as to make an apple scream
To be kissed by such. It be only a dream.

Her shapely figure this I cannot contest,
I wish to hold, but dare I? You jest.
Soft, supple and the porcelain skin divine,
That all this perfection can surely be mine.

Her soft world so close and dear
Each time she speaks I doubt and I fear,
Of the words coming forth, of what might ensue,
The yearning words, I Love You!

THY ROD AND THY STAFF

by John M. Bausell

THREE MARYS

by Merrill O. Cantrell

Three Marys stood in a bleak dark hell,
On a hill with a cross in Israel,
The soldiers brought the one they loved,
Through the crowd, pulled, pushed and shoved.

Nailed to the cross, his hands they bled,
So, too, the crown of thorns upon his head,
Tears flowed as they looked at one another,
Two dearest friends and holy mother.

On that dreary solemn hill in Israel,
Three Marys stood as silence fell,
And darkness spread across the land,
Then tombs sprang open, the dead did stand.

They placed him in a new-hewn tomb,
Cold as ice, dark as the womb,
Closed with a stone, on that seal,
So no one his body could steal.

On the first of the week the Marys came,
With bundles of spice to anoint his frame,
Nearby the tomb they stopped to stare ...
Who rolled the stone away from there?

Two men in white to the Marys they said,
"Why seek you the living among the dead?"
From out of that tomb he rose to rule,
Heaven his throne, earth his footstool.

I took a walk with death one day
listened to the reaper say
What manner of work he did pursue
what lies at the end for me, for you
From the start did he rant and rave
threatened me with lonely grave
Strove to conceive within me fear
make me believe that doom was near
But then he paused and turned to see
what his fearsome speech did to me
A look of forlorn crossed his face
he saw no worry, nary a trace
And then his hollow eyes met mine
bid me farewell, checked the time
Claimed he had to be on his way
many more visits had that day
As he fled I shouted advice
to die is gain, to live is Christ
So when death song I begin to sing
the reaper's scythe will hold no sting.



FINAL JOURNEY by Laura L. Hegg

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

by Alisa Carter

You are not alone
You will never be
For in your waking hours, my spirit is
 with you
Filling your memories with smiles, tears,
 hugs and, yes, sweet kisses.
And in your sleeping, you will feel my presence
 holding you, loving you
You are not alone
You never will be.

PACIFIC

by V. Laura Bozeman

From the poet's beach I gaze across the vast horizon,
and listen to the restless sighs of songs from long ago.
Treacherous wrath and fur, sensuous sighs and whispers
tell her story from the beginning of time.

Long before giant birds flew through her skies,
and ships sailed her waters, before the New World was
discovered and explored, ancient monoliths stood silently
along her rugged shores.

"Do not invade my solitude. Do not erode my pristine shores,
for your presence creates pollution," she rages with primordial roar.
"This was created by the fifth day, it has been here forever.
All that you create can be replaced, but this can never be made again!"

"So gaze at me from your distance, and we shall commune.
Listen to the gentle rhythm of my sighing, and I will sing
the song of peace."

EMOTIONS OF A ROSE

by Alisa Carter

A rose
A simple thing of beauty
Yet
It can mean so many different things
Birth
Celebration
Love
Just because
Death
A rose
A simple thing of beauty
And yet
So many emotions are wrapped up in
such a simple thing of beauty



CALM BEFORE THE STORM by Debra D. Powell

A NEW BEGINNING

by L. Maxine Johnston

What am I doing here?
I'm too old for this
I try to hit the mark,
But it seems as if I miss.

Have I set my goals too high,
Trying to start over again?
When I feel like crying,
I force myself to grin.

Will I be able to master it,
Or will my abilities be short?
Should I listen to my head,
Or should I follow my heart?

I'll just keep on trying,
And when I fail, I'll try again.
If it causes my heart to break,
It's sure in time to mend.

One day soon I'll reach my goal,
I'll learn it all, you'll see.
And on the day I graduate,
I'll be so proud of me.

SILLY THING

by Leona Colquitt

To be afraid
as you stand in need of aid

to rest in a shiny black box
wearing your best silk socks

is such a silly thing

trembling with fear
as your time comes near

is such a silly thing

consumed by fright
as you fight with all your might

against the pressing doom
of the dark, still room

is such a silly thing

to think that what lies ahead
is a place filled with dread

a museum of lost memories
where no one has the keys

to open what was or should have been

is such a silly thing.

MAY BE

by Pat P. Logan

May be I ain't gonna ace that course.
May be I ain't gonna even pass that course.
Like, who needs it?
My teach, he told me my grade was so low.
And I go, I go,
Huh, who needs it?
I got my shiny car.
Awesome.
I got my boom box.
Rad.

MATRICULATION: To My STUDENTS

by Candace H. Schaefer

And in the end, it all comes down to math. You wear your A
Like a Scout badge on your transcript. But what I remember is that
You cried when you read "The Race." The posted grade of C does not
Whisper the real story, the time you told me your husband had beaten you.
Again. And that F. No matter how many times I calculate the numbers, I
Cannot factor the brightness in your eyes as you read your first poem aloud.

I can only pray that on Judgment Day, God does not quantify me
As I have quantified you. I can only hope that mercy does not go only to
Those who have done the extra credit. For if in the end it comes down to math,
I will have to admit that erratic yet sincere effort only produced marginal results.
If it does in fact come down to math, I can only implore God to ask me if I loved
My students. And then I can say clearly, sincerely, that I loved you all.

